

The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 23 April 1968



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DAILY BRIEF
23 APRIL 1968

1. Vietnam

There continue to be a good many ripples from the prospect of peace talks. Saigon and Seoul are drawing closer together. Thieu hopes to visit South Korea after his US trip, and the South Koreans have offered Saigon the service of an experienced adviser for any peace discussions. In Vientiane, Souvanna Phouma has told Ambassador Sullivan that he thinks the subject of Laos should be raised early in US - North Vietnamese negotiations.

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Some of the North Vietnamese units in I Corps appear to be returning to their regular operating areas.

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2. Soviet Union

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3. Iran

A showdown between Iran and the Western oil consortium has been averted through a scheme Ambassador Meyer describes as an "adroit placement of mirrors." Under this arrangement, oil revenues will be calculated on the Iranian calendar year beginning 20 March. This ignores the first quarter of 1968 when production was low and makes it appear that Iranian demands are being met.

This gimmick, however, only gets the consortium off the hook until haggling starts again this fall over next year's revenues.

4. Jerusalem

The Israelis seem determined to celebrate their Independence Day with a military parade in occupied Jerusalem on 2 May. Arabs in Jerusalem see this as another example of Israel grinding in the conqueror's heel. If the Israelis go ahead with their plans, there will be a risk of terrorist bombings or other violence.

5. Congo

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Two DC-6s are now in Rwanda, and, with any luck at all, the mercenaries should be on their way out of Africa tomorrow.

6. Dominican Republic

Dominican leftists are planning demonstrations on 28 April to mark the third anniversary of the US landings. Although security forces seem capable of preventing serious disorder, there could be some trouble.

7. Soviet Union

The Soviet military presence in the Middle East has more and more the look of permanency. The evidence is examined in today's Annex.

8. Poland

The purge of Jewish party members is still in full swing. These purges are ostensibly aimed only at "Zionists"--Jews "disloyal" to Poland. More broadly, however, the issue is being used by young, impatient party elements to oust supporters of Gomulka's stagnant leadership and hasten the takeover of a new "Polish" generation.

The Nazi pogroms in Poland caused the death of three million Jews. Only some 30,000 remained at the end of World War II. But the high proportion of Jews within the Communist leadership during most of the postwar period has tended to perpetuate latent anti-Semitism among the people, even though most of the Jews in Gomulka's regime are moderates rather than Stalinists.

Anti-Semitism has always been prevalent in Poland, and a handy political smokescreen. Most Poles today probably regard the present campaign as part of a process to loosen the grip of Gomulka's old guard--which they regard as desirable--rather than as persecution of the Jews. They often remark that it is simply a matter of "one Communist trying to get another."

9. West Berlin

The US Mission has been informed that Senator Robert Kennedy has declined the invitation to speak in Berlin on May Day. He said the Indiana primary compelled him to remain in the US.

10. Libya

Libyan Prime Minister Bakkush came home from a recent visit to Paris with agreements providing for French assistance in a wide range of fields, including oil exploitation, education, and communications. The French presence in Libya will be considerably expanded. The French also offered arms, but Bakkush made no commitment on that subject. Ambassador Newsom believes the French are moving with an eye toward eventually replacing US influence in the country.

ANNEX

Soviet Military Presence in the Middle East

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We estimate that the number of Soviet military personnel in Egypt has now risen to as high as 2,000. There may be as many as 1,000 in Syria. These advisers have evidently been placed in the Egyptian and Syrian armies down to the battalion level.

The Soviet Navy is also playing an increasing role in the area. The forty-plus Soviet ships now in the eastern Mediterranean comprise the most heavily armed force Moscow has ever sent there. Soviet vessels clearly intend to use Egyptian and Syrian ports for resupply and limited maintenance.

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Defense Minister Grechko toured the Iraqi naval base on the gulf last month. The Iraqis are said to have been pressing for Soviet naval assistance to help them get a bigger voice in gulf affairs after British withdrawal in 1971.

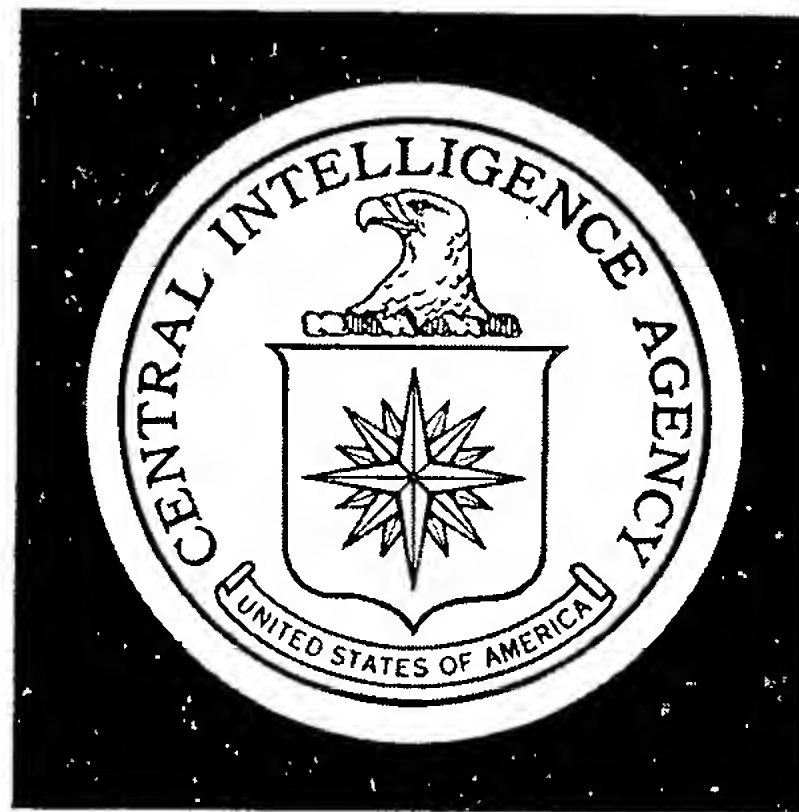
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Grechko was also in Egypt and Syria last month and other high Soviet officers have been making frequent visits. Another Soviet gesture was the first goodwill flight of Soviet bombers to Syria earlier this month.

Moscow's principal purpose in all this, of course, is to demonstrate its resolve to rebuild the Arab military forces. While Soviet assistance would almost certainly stop short of open participation in a new outbreak of hostilities with Israel, Moscow clearly expects political dividends from its military aid commitments. Moscow sees a long future for its military presence in the area.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION



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More on Paris as Acceptable Site:

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the Chinese think that the following are the

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main reasons these North Vietnamese favor Paris:

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--The French press "will give very favorable coverage" to the North Vietnamese position.

--Hanoi's representatives in Paris feel they are sufficiently equipped to support whomever North Vietnam sends to deal with the Americans.

--Communications with Hanoi are adequate.

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More Chinese Transportation Experts on the Way:
A recent intercept shows that 15 highway specialists, six railroad experts, and four factory specialists are being sent to North Vietnam.

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Hanoi Bridges: Both sides of the center portion of the Paul Doumer Bridge were lighted and being repaired last Tuesday night, according to the Western traveler who frequently visits Hanoi. He also reported seeing vehicles crossing the Canal des Rapides Bridge without blackout lights. All bridges in the Hanoi area were fully illuminated.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report.

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